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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000591

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SCRAPS AD HOC
COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

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Summary

1. (SBU) Mozambique's National Assembly recently voted in favor of dissolving the ad-hoc committee on electoral legislation. The move came after committee chair, Alfredo Gamito, reported that the group was unable to reach consensus on the composition of the National Election Council. The issue of electoral reform will now be addressed by a standing committee in the National Assembly, also headed by Gamito, by party vote -- meaning FRELIMO will dictate the result. This has raised concerns of some donors. End Summary.

Assembly Scraps Electoral Ad-Hoc Committee

2. (U) On May 4 the FRELIMO majority in Mozambique's National Assembly, by a vote of 144 to 77, moved to dissolve the ad-hoc committee established in March 2005 to revise the country's electoral legislation. The decision was taken after the committee chair, Alfredo Gamito, declared that the group was at an impasse on the composition of the National Election Council (CNE) -- one of at least half a dozen aspects of the elections process under review by the committee. Gamito stated that the committee had "achieved nothing" since it was established more than one year earlier due to the CNE deadlock and, against dissent by the opposition RENAMO, moved that the committee be abolished.

3. (SBU) The abolishment of the ad-hoc committee moves responsibility for revising electoral legislation to a standing committee in the National Assembly that Gamito heads, the Committee on Agriculture, Regional Development, Public Administration and Local Power. There FRELIMO deputies have ten seats and RENAMO only five (mirroring FRELIMO's nearly two-thirds hold on the National Assembly). Decision-making will be done by majority vote -- meaning FRELIMO will be able to entirely ignore RENAMO input, if it wishes. Comment: This represents a significant setback for RENAMO. In the ad-hoc committee, decisions could only be reached by consensus. End comment.

Finger Pointing

4. (SBU) The stumbling block was disagreement between FRELIMO and RENAMO on the number of political party representatives

to sit on the CNE. RENAMO proposed a 17-member body, of which 16 would be appointed by the parliamentary parties on the basis of parity (8 for FRELIMO and 8 for RENAMO), with the final member coming from civil society. FRELIMO took the other extreme, proposing a 15-member CNE comprised completely of civil society members. (Comment: In the end, FRELIMO was reportedly unwilling to grant parity on CNE to RENAMO, which holds only 90 of the 250 seats in the Assembly. RENAMO balked at the FRELIMO proposal, stating that civil society was "entirely under FRELIMO's thumb." End Comment.)

15. (SBU) Both FRELIMO and RENAMO continue to point fingers at one another. FRELIMO has claimed that RENAMO delegates did not have the political will or confidence from their leader to take decisions, and only wanted to "waste time." In a May 18 conversation with Emboff, RENAMO committee member Joao Alexandre blamed FRELIMO for the stalemate, stating that FRELIMO brought "completely unacceptable" proposals to the table on purpose in order to cause the deadlock. He asserted that the FRELIMO had demonstrated its "dictatorial character" by voting to abolish the ad-hoc committee, which in his view could have continued work on other important electoral reform issues despite the CNE stalemate.

Election Donors Worried

16. (SBU) The decision to disband the ad-hoc committee has raised concern within the donor community, which has had to foot most of the bill for the past three general elections. In 2004, the EU alone spent nearly USD 30 million on the December general election. When Mozambique's Constitutional Council in January 2005 issued a series of recommended changes to the electoral law to address shortcomings in the 2004 general election -- changes very similar to proposals made by EU observers, the Carter Center and others monitoring the election -- the donor community believed the GRM was

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serious about reform. Now, with changes no longer to be done by consensus, many are dismayed, worried that the GRM may opt to act only from narrow FRELIMO interests. In a luncheon with the Ambassador on May 18, the British High Commissioner commented that donors would be far more reticent about future election support if FRELIMO deputies in the committee ignored last year's recommendations.

17. (SBU) In a May 10 informal donor discussion hosted by USAID, some donor representatives opined that the stalemate may have been a stall tactic employed by both parties in order to force the postponement of the provincial elections scheduled for late 2007. (Comment: It is commonly believed that Mozambique will have an extremely difficult time managing the three consecutive elections scheduled for 2007, 2008 and 2009. Folding the 2007 provincial elections into either the 2008 municipal or 2009 general elections would buy the GRM time for better preparation. End Comment.)

Comment: RENAMO Played into FRELIMO's Hand?

18. (SBU) RENAMO's stubborn insistence on political party parity appears to have been a serious mis-step. With electoral reform moving to a "majority rules" environment, it seems likely that the main opposition party's input will be far more muted than before. The question now is to what extent FRELIMO will use its majority power to shape the electoral law to its advantage. Perhaps RENAMO's strategy is to force the donor community to police FRELIMO. In any event, looming ahead is a busy electoral cycle in which RENAMO clearly will be playing catch up.

La Lime